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Chairman: Mr. MURPHY (Ireland)
(Vice-Chairman)

CONTENTS

AGENDA ITEM 96: ENVIRONMENT AND SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT (continued)

(a) IMPLEMENTATION OF DECISIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE UNITED NATIONS CONFERENCE ON ENVIRONMENT AND DEVELOPMENT (continued)

(b) DESERTIFICATION AND DROUGHT (continued)

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In the absence of the Chairman, Mr. Murphy (Ireland) took the Chair.

The meeting was called to order at 3.15 p.m.

AGENDA ITEM 96: ENVIRONMENT AND SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT (continued) (A/50/25, A/50/171, A/50/182-E/1996/66 and Corr.1, A/50/254-S/1995/501, A/50/366, A/50/371, A/50/400, A/50/407, A/50/425-S/1995/787, A/50/475, A/50/518, A/C.2/50/2)

(a) IMPLEMENTATION OF DECISIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE UNITED NATIONS CONFERENCE ON ENVIRONMENT AND DEVELOPMENT (continued) (A/50/3, A/50/94 and Add.1, A/50/218, A/50/453, A/50/515)

(b) DESERTIFICATION AND DROUGHT (continued) (A/50/227-E/1995/99, A/50/347, A/50/516)

1. Mr. ACHA (Peru) reaffirmed the central role of the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) as the principal body within the United Nations system responsible for coordinating and stimulating activities in the area of the environment. Only with serious participation on the part of Member States could UNEP play a key supporting role. The developed countries should therefore maintain their commitments to contribute to and finance environmental activities and in particular to support UNEP.

2. Peru's wide diversity of climates, tremendous reserves of fauna, flora, microbiological and genetic resources that were critical to the future of the world food and pharmaceutical industries, were at the service of the international community. However, the terms of their availability were governed by the relevant provisions of the Convention on Biological Diversity. In that regard, there was a need for new and additional resources as well as for greater transfers of technology in the context of broad international cooperation. Greater and better access to biotechnology within the framework of Agenda 21 would benefit the indigenous peoples and communities as well as farmers.

3. The struggle against desertification and drought had been given a very high priority by his Government for desertification was a serious problem in the high plains, shared by Bolivia and Peru. He therefore called for an early ratification and implementation of the International Convention to Combat Desertification in those Countries Experiencing Serious Drought and or Desertification, particularly in Africa. For a number of reasons, including the very limited availability of arable land, a considerable number of farmers in Peru were turning to the more lucrative cultivation of coca leaves causing further degradation of the soil. He appealed to the donor community to ensure a flow of substantial financial resources in order to deal with that drought and desertification. It would also be helpful to have more efficient forms of international cooperation such as debt for nature swaps, debt cancellation or trust funds or the provision of resources for programmes of action at the national, subregional or regional levels.

4. Mr. FRASER (Canada) said that the United Nations had shown its capacity to achieve results, but much more had to be done to fulfil the commitments made at

Rio. For its part, Canada had focused in particular on the issues of fisheries and forests. The successful negotiations of the Convention on Straddling Fish Stocks and Highly Migratory Fish Stocks in New York had been a particularly significant achievement; all Member States should sign the Convention and ratify it as quickly as possible. The Intergovernmental Panel on Forests had developed a detailed programme of work aimed at providing the Commission on Sustainable Development with recommendations for action on key forest issues. Canada would provide 130,000 Canadian dollars to support the work and aims of the Panel and assist developing countries in participating at the meetings. With regard to UNEP, the streamlining of programme priorities would ensure that work was focused on environmental issues in an integrated and holistic way. It was important that the Bretton Woods institutions should make sustainable development a central goal of their policies and programmes as recommended by the Group of Seven at their meeting in Halifax.

5. Action on climate change, oceans and urban environmental issues should be at the top of the international agenda. Climate change was a major environmental problem that called for concerted and sustained action at the local, national and international levels. Protection of the oceans was also very important. The Canadian fishing industry had been severely affected by the depletion of fish stocks as a result of land-based sources of marine pollution, overexploitation of marine species, and the destruction of the coastal habitat. Action must be taken to reverse that phenomenon. Canada therefore supported the work on a global programme of action for the protection of the marine environment from land-based activities.

6. Canada had also undertaken a number of institutional measures to "green" its policies and operations and was in the process of creating a Commission of Environment and Sustainable Development; each federal department was required to prepare a sustainable development strategy over the next two years.

7. At a recent meeting of the international experts on persistent organic pollutants, held in Vancouver, it had been agreed that immediate action was needed at every level to deal with the problem of organic pollutants. Canada expected to participate actively in negotiations on a convention concerning the prior informed consent procedure for certain hazardous chemicals.

8. Canada had undertaken a commitment to stabilize green gas emissions at the 1990 level by the year 2000 and to explore the options for further reductions to the year 2005. Its national action programme on climate change formed the model for future action in that area.

9. Canada had devised its own biodiversity strategy with the involvement of various governmental bodies and business, environmental and aboriginal groups. At the global level, it had been active in promoting the implementation of the Convention on Biological Diversity and would be sponsoring a biodiversity technology fair at the upcoming meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the Convention in Indonesia, providing financial support for the participation of developing countries and assisting some of them in the development of national biodiversity strategies. Canada would be co-sponsoring a regional planning workshop on the economics of biodiversity for Latin American and Caribbean

countries, and had offered to host the permanent secretariat of the Biodiversity Convention in Montreal.

10. In view of the importance it attached to the sustainable development of small island States, Canada had contributed over 90 million Canadian dollars to assist with improvements in air transport, air safety and maintenance of civil aircraft in the Caribbean region. It had also contributed some 18 million dollars for a public awareness campaign and national action programmes to deal with desertification and drought in the Sahel region. In addition, it had set up a Desertification Convention Office to respond to desertification problems. Although those were significant achievements, considerable work remained to be done.

11. Pending the special session of the General Assembly on the review of Agenda 21, it was important that the international community should identify those issues that were critical to achieving sustainability for the next decade and develop the international mechanisms that would ensure substantial progress on those issues. The coordinating role of the Commission on Sustainable Development should be strengthened and all major groups should be encouraged to participate actively in the discussion of environmental processes.

12. Mr. BALZAN (Malta) said that the issue of environmental degradation, particularly of the marine environment, was of special significance to Malta. Although each small island State faced different specific problems, concerted action on the international, regional and national levels was imperative. For example, the pressures exerted on the Mediterranean environment, both an important maritime highway and a tourist destination, were of concern to the Government of Malta, which believed that further mechanisms were needed in support of that region's sustainable development. The establishment of a Mediterranean Commission on Sustainable Development would have a positive impact on social and economic growth in the region. Climate change was another critical issue, and Malta urged countries to honour fully their commitments under the Framework Convention on Climate Change. For its part, Malta had stepped up action to eliminate the use of ozone-depleting gases by the turn of the century. His delegation shared the concern that shrinkage in the budget of UNEP could undermine the implementation of Agenda 21. Environmental concerns should not become secondary to social and economic issues.

13. The concept of international security was evolving from a purely military definition to one also encompassing economic, environmental and social aspects. Any operational and structural reform within the United Nations system must be propelled by a vision for the future and backed by adequate financial resources. In that context, Malta suggested that the Trusteeship Council might perhaps be entrusted with the additional role of acting as guardian of the common ecological heritage of humanity and holding it in trust for future generations.

14. Mr. ZAW WYNN (Myanmar) said that as a result of the transition to a market-oriented economic policy and the rapid pace of industrialization, environmental considerations had assumed a major role in his Government's decision-making. The National Commission on Environmental Affairs played a fundamental role in the development of sound environmental policies and the setting of environmental standards. The Government had taken measures to deal

with environmental degradation. In the border areas, where development had lagged behind other parts of the country, an integrated programme for development had been launched to wean the inhabitants from dependence on poppy cultivation and to eliminate poverty. The programme was also expected to replace agricultural techniques that harmed the environment.

15. The Government had also initiated action to combat land degradation through afforestation and reforestation in nine districts. At the same time, it was devoting significant resources to developing and strengthening integrated development programmes for the eradication of poverty and promotion of alternative livelihood systems in areas prone to land degradation.

16. While Myanmar was less severely affected by desertification and drought than some of its neighbours, it believed that concerted regional and global action was required in order to attenuate the consequences of that scourge world wide.

17. His delegation hoped that the 1997 special session of the General Assembly to review the implementation of Agenda 21 would be successful in identifying the critical constraints to the implementation of the commitments agreed on in Rio.

18. Mr. AHMIA (Algeria) said that problems pertaining to the preservation of a sound environment were clear and striking examples of the increasing interdependence which characterized today's world. Since the developing countries had embarked on far-reaching structural reforms and were facing such problems as a crushing debt burden and declining terms of trade, the international community should provide substantial additional resources for the implementation of Agenda 21 and take steps to transfer ecologically sound technologies to developing countries on favourable terms.

19. Achievement of sustainable development should not be used as a pretext for hampering the development efforts of the countries of the South. Cooperation and partnership between countries of the North and South was the best way to cope with the environmental problems facing the international community. As the most vulnerable and poorest region of the planet, Africa should be given priority in the mobilization of resources.

20. Turning to the issue of desertification and drought, he said that Africa was the continent most severely affected by that problem. Over the previous 50 years, nearly 65 million hectares of once green land on the southern fringes of the Sahara had been swallowed up by the desert. That, coupled with soil degradation, deforestation and locust attacks had worsened the continent's already critical economic situation. The international community should accordingly commit itself to emergency action for Africa. Such action should form part of a global, integrated and multidisciplinary approach which took into account, on a priority basis, the interaction between environmental strategies and various development programmes in Africa.

21. Pending the entry into force of the Convention to Combat Drought and Desertification, it was important that the international consensus in favour of emergency assistance to Africa should produce its full effect as quickly as possible in order to support African countries in coping with the challenges of

desertification pursuant to article 7 of the Convention. Efforts made to that end by countries of the Arab Maghreb Union and countries of the Saharo-Sahelian subregion deserved further support by the Interim Secretariat of the Convention. The establishment of a Global Mechanism pursuant to article 21 of the Convention would, in that regard, be a crucial first step towards gathering adequate resources to combat desertification. In his delegation's view, that Global Mechanism should function under the authority of the Conference of the Parties.

22. Algeria welcomed the steps taken by the Interim Secretariat to heighten public awareness especially through the observance of World Day to Combat Desertification and Drought. His delegation attached considerable importance to the continued role played by the Interim Secretariat within the framework of the preparatory activities organized by the affected countries.

23. Ms. WEILL-HALLE (International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD)) said that the real test of the Convention to Combat Desertification, was the impact it would have on people in the drylands. In that regard, the Fund would play a twofold role in the implementation of the Convention. First, it would continue to pursue innovative programmes that assisted the poor in fragile ecosystems, including dryland areas, to unleash their productive capacity through conservation-based strategies. It expected to provide $150 million to 200 million annually out of its regular resources for marginal areas. Second, it would continue to mobilize additional resources for poverty alleviation initiatives in dryland and other areas of high poverty incidence. Through its Special Programme for Sub-Saharan African Countries Affected by Drought and Desertification, IFAD had been able to provide additional resources directly to African countries.

24. Lack of awareness was the single most important obstacle to effective implementation of the Convention. The Fund had worked closely with the Interim Secretariat preparing a simplified version of the Convention and was also exploring the possibility of audio-visual versions of the Convention intended for the population in dryland areas. The Fund was also concerned at ensuring that funds got down to the community level. In that regard, it had agreed to host, along with the Interim Secretariat and others, a forum on participatory local area development programmes.

25. The Global Mechanism must go beyond a clearing-house function in order to actively solicit and facilitate the participation of financing institutions and the private sector in implementing the Convention. The Global Mechanism should be a catalyser, innovator and promoter of financial opportunities for sustainable dryland development. The Fund felt that it had the potential capacity to host a successful Global Mechanism. In that context, the Rome-based food and agriculture agencies of the United Nations agreed that sustainable agriculture, food security and poverty alleviation were prerequisites for the successful implementation of the Convention. Finally, IFAD, in collaboration with others, was organizing a conference on hunger and poverty in Brussels on 20 and 21 November.

26. Mr. ELDEEB (Egypt) said that although the Rio Conference had recognized the global nature of environmental problems and the need for the international community to address them on the basis of a comprehensive strategy,

incorporating social, economic, environmental and development issues, the advanced industrial nations continued to increase production at the expense of the global environment and of the developing world. The international community should remember that sustainable development was not attainable without social justice.

27. The 1997 review of Agenda 21 was of particular importance in the light of the results of recent global conferences and it was important that preparation should include institutional matters, as well as objectives for future work at the national, regional and international levels. The concept of sustainable development was multifaceted and economic, social and environmental facts should be considered in a systematic manner.

28. Although much had been achieved since the Rio Conference in terms of environmental legislation and organizational matters, there had been little progress in terms of implementation. Essentially that was due to a lack of financial resources and failure to transfer environmentally sound technology to the developing world. The special session of the General Assembly should devise urgent measures to create the institutional mechanisms at national, regional and international levels to follow through on the Rio commitments.

29. He hoped that the special session would produce a final declaration that would not only assess the successes but also outline priorities for the future to overcome the obstacles which had appeared over the past five years and call for strengthened cooperation between advanced countries and the developing world, with a view to creating the kind of sustainable development envisaged at the various global conferences.

30. Preparation was vital to its success; Egypt therefore supported the proposal contained in document A/50/453, paragraph 40, for the holding of regional reviews early in 1996, to provide input into the overall review. The first step would be for Member States to undertake national reviews; that would be followed by regional meetings whose results would be considered by the high-level segment of the Sustainable Development Commission in 1997. The Commission should present its recommendations to the special session and a draft final statement could be prepared. The nineteenth session of the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) could also be used to prepare for the special session.

31. The International Convention to Combat Desertification was an ambitious instrument. Egypt was proud to be among the first six States to sign it and hoped that more countries would follow suit so that it could come into force in the first half of 1996 and a conference of Parties to the Convention could be held in 1997. More funding should be made available for the preparation of that conference.

32. Egypt had experienced problems with irrigation, drinking water shortages and soil erosion in the north of the country. International cooperation and support were needed to help Egypt increase its water resources and gain access to technology to improve the quality of drinking water in rural and desert regions. Meanwhile, Egypt had undertaken a number of programmes analysing water consumption patterns and the management of water resources.

33. Regional cooperation in Africa and the Mediterranean area was an important element in the preservation of water resources, with the creation of an early warning system to identify the risk of drought or water shortages in those regions.

34. With regard to biological diversity, developing countries continued to require assistance with capacity-building. States should implement the provisions of the Convention on Biological Diversity and transfer the necessary technology to developing countries. Again, capacity-building in developing countries could not be undertaken without the provision of financial resources, so that training in environmental and natural resources management could be undertaken. At the technical level, the Conference of the Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity should devise technical guidelines for a protocol on biological safety to be prepared at the Cairo meeting in December.

35. UNEP played a vital coordinating role in international cooperation on environmental matters and should receive more support and financial resources so that Agenda 21 could be fully implemented. The Governing Council's decision to support the goals and aims of the Council of Arab Ministers Responsible for the Environment (18/39 C) was a welcome move and support should be afforded to the appropriate sections of the Arab League.

36. For its part, Egypt had taken a number of environmental measures, passing special laws, setting up its own Ministry of the Environment and supporting the Global Environment Facility, while participating actively in regional and international cooperation forums. It looked forward to the revitalization of the sustainable development process.

37. Mr. KOREISSI (Mali) said that over 900 million people throughout the world were threatened by desertification and drought. The adoption of the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification in June 1994 was an important step forward. He paid tribute to those States which had contributed to the special voluntary fund which had made it possible for representatives of many countries directly affected to participate in the sessions of the Intergovernmental Negotiating Committee.

38. It was encouraging to see that, although the Convention had not yet entered into force, the signatories were all actively implementing emergency measures for Africa. At the subregional level, Mali had joined its efforts with eight other countries which were members of the Permanent Inter-State Committee on Drought Control in the Sahel (CILSS). Mali's national plan to combat desertification, in place since 1985, focused on combating ecosystem degradation, management and development of energy potential and hydraulic systems. For Mali, where 80 to 90 per cent of environmental problems were related to desertification, implementation of the Convention to Combat Desertification was a matter of the highest priority.

39. Ms. MAIKARFI (Niger) said that for some time, the Niger's environmental policy had focused on combating desertification, thus neglecting other aspects of the question. The Niger had observed World Day to Combat Desertification through a major information and public awareness programme on the Convention to

Combat Desertification. Recently, however, it had begun to adopt a more multidisciplinary, global approach.

40. Earlier that year, a national workshop had been held to launch the process of drafting a national environmental plan for sustainable development. A national forum on the subject was planned for January 1996 and the plan itself would be drafted between February and August.

41. The Niger had made a firm commitment to implement the activities envisaged in the Convention. However, that would require financial resources. Her delegation was concerned at the low level of voluntary contributions received thus far for the implementation of the emergency measures for Africa, and hoped that the international community would respond to the appeals for increased resources.

42. Mr. CHANDIO (Pakistan) said that, despite the progress that had been achieved, there were increasing grounds for pessimism regarding the full implementation of the decisions and recommendations adopted in Rio. Foremost among the issues of concern was the question of financing. Thus far, the only mechanism to fund environmental projects was the Global Environment Facility, but, with a total funding of only $2 billion, it could not be expected to make any significant contribution towards the implementation of the Rio commitments, especially since the financial requirements for the implementation of Agenda 21 had been estimated at $125 billion per year. The transfer of environmentally sound technology to developing countries was another area of concern. It was particularly unfortunate that one of the major recommendations of Agenda 21, the establishment of environmentally sound technology banks, appeared to have fallen by the wayside.

43. The Rio process seemed to be responsive primarily to the concerns of developed countries. Specific measures had yet to be taken to address the prime cause of environmental degradation, namely, unsustainable and wasteful patterns of consumption and production. In addition, the proliferation of inter-sessional sectoral meetings had outstripped the ability of developing countries to follow the environmental discourse. That had serious consequences, since the outcome of such meetings often became the basis of decisions taken by the Commission on Sustainable Development. Undoubtedly, there should be attempts to address pressing sectoral issues, but not at the expense of addressing the structural causes of environmental degradation. Unless such structural issues were addressed, the special session of the General Assembly in 1997 was likely to yield disappointing results.

44. Mr. AASS (Norway), referring to the 1997 special session of the General Assembly, said that it should be a separate session in June 1997, so as to increase the visibility of the event. Priorities should be considered on the basis of an assessment of areas where sufficient progress had been achieved or where new or revitalized efforts to meet the goals set in Rio were needed. A comprehensive report of the Secretary-General on the overall assessment of progress achieved would be a good starting-point. He shared the view of the representative of Pakistan that the issue of sustainable consumption and production patterns could serve as an umbrella concept integrating the environmental and economic factors.

45. With regard to the outcome of the session, it should highlight areas where further improvements were required. It should also be used as an opportunity for the international community to agree on how to intensify efforts to enhance the implementation of Agenda 21. He agreed with the Secretary-General that the level of representation at the special session should be such as to maintain the high political momentum begun in Rio. The special session should also take advantage of broad participation by major groups which had proven to be enriching to the Commission on Sustainable Development. A good outcome required good preparation, and the Commission would have a central role to play. The two remaining sessions before June 1997 should be used to prepare for the special session.

46. Mr. GUTIERREZ (Costa Rica), speaking on behalf of the Central American countries, recalled that the Presidents of the countries in his region had, in October 1994, adopted a strategy known as the Alliance for the sustainable development of Central America, which covered the political, moral, economic, social, cultural and environmental aspects of development.

47. The Alliance was guided by two principles: economic growth based on equity and achieved without harming natural resources, thus giving the most vulnerable groups in Central America real opportunities for progress; and the indivisible character of the natural heritage. Measures to bring about sustainable development had already been adopted. As a complement to existing instruments of regional integration, the Central American Council for Sustainable Development had been set up for promotion and negotiation with other countries and organizations.

48. The concept behind the Alliance was to bring about progressive change in the quality of life through economic growth with social equity and the transformation of the methods of production, at the same time maintaining the ecological balance. It respected the ethnic and cultural diversity of the area and called for full participation by all. It also sought to promote peace and democracy.

49. As a first link with countries outside the region, the Central American countries had recently embarked on cooperation with the United States on sustainable development and the joint implementation of measures to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and other forms of pollution, education and training programmes, energy diversification and conservation, the protection of ecosystems and the interchange of information.

50. The Commission on Sustainable Development should examine the proposals on specific methods on such important topics as the indicators of sustainable development, the participation of society in general in the process of development, the standards required for environmental products and new mechanisms for financing development.

51. Ms. WILLIAMS-MANIGAULT (United States of America) praised the report contained in document A/50/453. Her country favoured a special session for the overall review of Agenda 21, conducted with minimal expense. It was important that the special session should be forward-looking. Its main focus should be the integrated implementation of the results of recent major United Nations

conferences. In that context it should address the future mission and actions of the Commission on Sustainable Development. Her country believed that that would be best accomplished by having the Commission oversee the integrated plan for implementing the outcome of the various conferences. The special session should also address the policy-making role of the Economic and Social Council.

52. As for the outcome of the session, it would be preferable to have a factual report or assessment, in the form of a Chairman's summary, rather than a negotiated political declaration. Decisions on the level of representation were a matter for each country. However, the level of representation at the forty-seventh session of the General Assembly, during discussion of the outcome of the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development, could provide a useful example.

53. Her country was generally satisfied with the tenor and outcomes of the eighteenth session of the Governing Council of the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP). It was heartened by the reaffirmation by the Group of 77 and China of the central role of UNEP as the principal body for catalysing and coordinating action on environment within the United Nations system. UNEP still, however, faced serious challenges. The United States had urged it to give top priority to getting Governments together to address global environmental concerns and to continue emphasizing its role in monitoring, assessing and analysing global environmental trends. UNEP continued to perform many functions usefully. Of particular interest was its activity in developing binding Prior Informed Consent procedures for toxic chemicals, the databank programme for Awareness and Preparedness for Accidents at the Local Level and its Regional Seas Programme.

54. The United States was also pleased with the outcome of the third session of the Commission on Sustainable Development. It was heartened that the Commission had undertaken work in areas where there had been gaps, especially in respect of work on international forest issues. The Commission could improve by continuing its focus on promoting the concept of sustainable development, addressing special or new and emerging issues and promoting coordination on sustainable development. That involved bringing together national sustainable development bodies, promoting the voluntary national reporting process, encouraging countries to develop plans or strategies and agreeing on a list of key indicators to measure progress towards the goals of the Rio Declaration on Environment and Development.

55. The United States fully supported the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification, and urged all concerned countries to support the Convention's goals.

56. Mr. HAMDAM (Lebanon) said that throughout the 16 years of war his country had managed to participate in meetings and conferences dealing with the environment, and when it had re-emerged from years of strife it had established the Ministry of Environment. Environmental considerations had been incorporated in the National Agenda on rehabilitation and reconstruction. A governmental committee had also been established comprising representatives from various ministries with a view to coordinating the construction and rehabilitation efforts on an environmentally sound basis. The Ministry of Environment also

held monthly consultative meetings with representatives of the private sector to exchange views and information on ways to protect the environment. Projects to stop agricultural degradation and deforestation, to clean the seashores and to introduce new technologies to factories in order to make them environmental-friendly were in hand.

57. Mr. YOOGALINGAM (Malaysia) said that the effects of the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development were mixed; implementation of programmes under Agenda 21 still suffered from the constraints of resources and political will. Moreover, the burden of change continued to be placed disproportionately on the developing countries. Appropriate mechanisms to study the implementation of Agenda 21 should be put in place so that relevant decisions could be taken in 1997.

58. Resources for development activities were contracting all round. Overseas development assistance had declined for the fourth consecutive year and stood at 0.29 per cent of gross national product. If existing commitments were not honoured, moreover, recipient countries would suffer adverse consequences

59. One bright spot in an otherwise disappointing scene was the progress achieved in the Global Environment Facility which was currently operational. However, the US$ 2 billion made available was not adequate to meet all the obligations under the relevant Conventions and should therefore be seen merely as an initial contribution. An innovative financial mechanism should be given serious consideration. Priority attention should be given to various proposed global taxation schemes, including modest levies on global air travel, a tax on global speculative flows of capital, a tax on the exploitation of mankind's common assets on the seabed and a tax on trade in weapons of war.

60. The transition towards sustainable development should not be exploited as an opportunity for external sources to dictate the development policies and strategies of developing countries. Nor should environmental concerns be used as a way of promoting protectionist policies. Flagrant disregard for global environmental concern had also been demonstrated by the current nuclear tests in the South Pacific and elsewhere. All nuclear testing should cease immediately. There was no guarantee that there would be no serious environmental or health implications. An independent international commission of eminent scientists, particularly from neighbouring countries, should be dispatched immediately to undertake an impartial verification of the impact on the environment.

61. With regard to the UNEP report, his delegation noted that while the scope of its responsibilities continued to expand, contributions to UNEP continued to decrease. The relationship between the Commission on Sustainable Development and UNEP should be considered and rationalized; duplication should be avoided by ensuring that the Commission remained the overarching policy body. The problem of the decline and unpredictability of contributions to the UNEP Environment Fund needed to be resolved for UNEP could not function effectively if resource availability remained uncertain. Lastly, he announced that on 6 October 1995 Malaysia had signed and ratified the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification and had made a modest contribution of US$ 10,000 to support its implementation.

The meeting rose at 6 p.m.